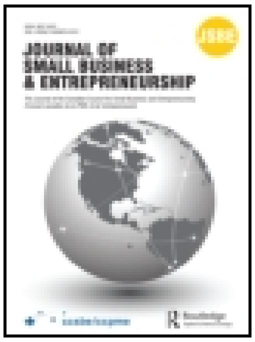

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Scaffolding entrepreneurship: a local SME-NGO partnership to enable cocoa production in Ghana

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This research used case study to explore how a small-to-medium enterprise (SME) domestic cocoa processor in Ghana collaborated with a Ghanaian non-governmental organization (NGO) to address barriers to the venture's expansion. From in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, our results found that challenges raised by low print-literacy and shifting, unclear, or inaccessible regulatory/certification requirements – including work certification for employees, site conformance, and third-party food-safety testing – hindered the SME's growth and mandated its consultation with the NGO in order to navigate these linguistic and regulatory barriers. This study contributes on two fronts to the emerging literature around SME-NGO collaborations as sustainable hybrid social enterprises. First, it highlights a need for increased nontraditional funding streams (beyond microfinancing) to support SME activity, given that front-end and/or ongoing consultancy and certification costs effectively 'price-out' access and participation by otherwise qualified and potentially economically contributory actors. Second, it illustrates how this kind of sustainable hybrid social enterprise can better enable market access and operation by partner-SMEs when the NGO helps to 'bridge the gap' between local SME business practices and the demands of an existing regulatory or certification regime. Further implications from this study for sustainable development and future research into social enterprise collaborations are discussed.

Keywords: cocoa; small-scale partnership; NGO; Ghana; sustainable hybrid organization

Cette recherche a utilisé une étude de cas pour examiner comment les petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) nationales de transformation du cacao collaborent-elles avec les organisations non gouvernementales (ONG) pour lever les obstacles à leur expansion au Ghana. Des entretiens approfondis avec les principaux acteurs concernés, il ressort de nos résultats que les défis soulevés et qui sont relatifs à la faible alphabétisation manifeste les exigences réglementaires ou de certification changeantes floues ou inaccessibles—comprenant la certification du travail des employés, la conformité des sites et les tests de sécurité alimentaire réalisés par des tiers—ont entravé la croissance des PME et conditionné leur rapport avec les ONG afin de surmonter les barrières linguistiques et réglementaires. Cette étude a doublement contribué à la littérature émergente relative aux collaborations PME-ONG en tant qu'entreprises sociales hybrides durables. D'une part, cette étude a souligné la

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nécessité d'augmenter les flux de financement non traditionnels (au-delà du microfinancement) pour soutenir l'activité des PME, étant donné que frais de consultation et de certification initiaux et/ou continuassent effectivement «prix-out» accès et la participation pour autres acteurs qualifiés qui sont potentiellement et financièrement contributifs. D'autre part, l'étude illustre comment ce type d'entreprise sociale hybride durable peut mieux permettre l'accès et l'exploitation des marchés par les PME-partenaires lorsque les ONG contribution pour «combler l'écart» entre les pratiques commerciales pour locales des PME et les exigences d'une réglementation ou d'un régimes de certification existante. D'autres implications de cette étude pour le développement durable et la recherche future les collaborations pour entreprises sociales ont été discutées.

Mots clés: cacao; partenariat à petite échelle; organisation non gouvernemen ale (ONG); Ghana; organisation hybride durable

Introduction: history, theoretical framework, literature review, and constraints

Historical context of cocoa production in Ghana

Cocoa production in Ghana dates from the mid-nineteenth century, when commercial farmers in the southern Gold Coast purchased unoccupied forest land from the local chiefs to cultivate cocoa on it (Hill 1963). Previously, Dutch missionaries had planted cocoa, circa 1815, but a collapse in the world-price of palm oil in 1885 prompted some farmers to seek out new export crop alternatives, particularly rubber. By 1890, these investors had accumulated sufficient capital to purchase the land noted above and plant cocoa trees (Amanor 2010).

Although Ghana had established itself by 1910–1914 as a world leader in cocoa production, pests, disease, and transportation issues subsequently brought the sector into crisis. Partly to stabilize further volatility, but also as is typical for African countries with major agricultural export crops (Kolavalli and Vigneri 2011), in 1947, the colonial government of Ghana established a Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) to control and regulate the market (Brooks, Croppenstedt, and Aggrey-Fynn 2007). Various booms and busts in the cocoa market followed, but the important constant throughout was the major importance of cocoa in Ghana both economically and politically (Kolavalli and Vigneri 2011).

In 1984, the colonial-era CMB was rechristened with its present name, COCOBOD, but its centralized market control of cocoa remained fundamentally unchanged. From 1983 to 2008, an important expansion of the cocoa value-chain in Ghana included rehabilitation projects to help farmers plant higher yielding cocoa trees (Brooks, Croppenstedt, and Aggrey-Fynn 2007). Similarly, following some governmental support for in-country cocoa processing by foreign enterprises, the tripled export earnings between 1991 and 2004 from \$32 million to \$105 million (Kolavalli and Vigneri 2011) contributed some to poverty reduction (McKay and Coulombe 2003). Nonetheless, by 2007, Ghana was effectively tied with Nigeria and Cameroon in the total percentage of West African cocoa exports and was well behind Côte d'Ivoire (Kolavalli and Vigneri 2011).

Although state-owned institutions typically manage major agricultural export crops in African countries, Kolavalli and Vigneri (2011) have argued that, contrary to criticisms of these institutions as frequently places of corruption and inefficiency (c.f., Bates 2005; Akiyama et al. 2000), 'Despite granting Cocobod the monopoly over marketing, Ghana has managed to develop a marketing system that passes on an increasingly larger share of export prices to farmers' (207). Even so, smallholder farmers remain dependent on access to this system for their livelihoods.

At present in Ghana, the cocoa value-chain fits into a partially liberalized economic structure that combines elements of privatization with a strong government presence (World Bank 2013). By the early 1990s, COCOBOD's monopolization of cocoa marketing both domestically and internationally gave way to some privatization of internal marketing that allowed licensing of private companies to purchase cocoa beans from farmers and deliver them to COCOBOD (Vigneri and Santos 2009). Price, however, is still generally determined and regulated by the government based on revenues and costs (Kolavalli et al. 2012). Moreover, while government incentives and support for both national and transnational processing of raw beans within Ghana into cocoa products exists, the majority of cocoa beans are still processed internationally. Assisting smallholder (small-to-medium enterprise, SME) cocoa entrepreneurs to domestically process raw cocoa beans into cocoa products, like cocoa butter and chocolate, could potentially improve their livelihoods and income in addition to that currently accessible through COCOBOD.

Theoretical framework

We anchor this work on one Ghanaian SME broadly within a framework of SMEs viewed through human resource development (HRD) theory (Garavan, Gunnigle, and Morley 2000). The issue is pertinent, as Jenkins (2004) can note that more than half of the world's employees work at SMEs, which comprise as much as 90% of businesses world-wide.

Considerable past and ongoing research across many economic sectors into the effects of regulatory regimes on SMEs have highlighted challenges around accessibility to financing (Scott, Forte, and Mazeau 2017). While germane, this less directly addresses non-financial barriers to SME activity (Haselip, Desgain, and Mackenzie 2015) and, in particular, the unintended consequences of regulatory regimes on SME market access and operation (Oosterveer et al. 2014). With respect to Ghanaian cocoa exports, for example, while Tengey (2017) found widespread support among international actors and regulators for European Union certification standards affecting the cocoa producer value-chain, they also expressed mixed feelings that such certifications could (and did) unduly impact primary cocoa producers.

However these several economic sectors ultimately balance the benefits of regulatory certification against their unintended consequences, the challenge of how to interface producers and regulatory regimes will remain. In principle, social enterprises – as any kind of the various hybrid public-private or other similarly mixed organizations (Lyon and Al Faruq 2018) – offer one way to effect this interface without simply adding another front-end (consultancy) cost that further reduces market-entry accessibility (Harris 2016). Specifically, Battilana and Dorado (2010) propose the notion of *sustainable hybrid organizations*, 'organizations that combine institutional logics in unprecedented ways' (1419). Under this theoretical organizational framework, success for sustainable hybrid organizations involves creating 'a common organizational identity that strikes a balance between the logics they combine' (1419) – an aspiration particularly crucial in our present case, where traditional or indigenous forms of cocoa farming, processing, and its entrepreneurial activity had to interface with modernized or technocratic forms of business logistics in order to expand.

Literature review

Farmers have long been recognized for their skills in food production and for self-employment generally (Carter 1996) – a skill-set that lends itself both to informal (Borch and Forsman 2000) and more formal SME activity alike (Eikeland and Lie 1999). Like other would-be entrepreneurs, farmers establish SMEs out of the needs, opportunities, constraints, and conditions in their area (McNally 2001; Fuller 1990; Ilbery 1991). For agricultural value-chain production, postharvest processing, and marketing, this involves not only a formalization of existing practices – obtaining certifications, registering as a business, and/or use formal business analytics to measure and track the course of the enterprise (Gnyawali and Fogel 1994) – but also the development of an entrepreneurial self-identity that ideally augments, rather than supplants or replaces, the culturally prior, local sense of farmer self-identity (Desai 2017; Audretsch et al. 2017).

While farmers will often aspire to SME status, collaborations with NGOs and/or other similar entities can benefit or support those farmers interested in exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities. In Ghana, however, the potential gains of this have yet to translate into a viable entrepreneurial market for smallholder cocoa producers. Between 1995 and 2014, while cocoa accounted for more than 30% of export earnings, and contributed to the cash income of 40 to 50 million people, cocoa growers only received approximately 6.6% of the total value-added per ton of cocoa beans sold (Fountain and Hütz-Adam 2015). For the typical smallholder cocoa farmer with two hectares of land, this yields only $2.69 per day (Lambert 2014), despite the fact that smallholders produce the majority of cocoa (Anim-Kwapong and Frimpong 2004). Partly, this is due to control of the cocoa market by a powerful agricultural board (COCOBOD) (Brooks, Croppenstedt, and Aggrey-Fynn 2007), but is due as well to the ways that regulatory regimes impose barriers that can preclude qualified farmers from market entry or participation due to high front-end costs, literacy issues, and/or corruption (Haselip, Desgain, and Mackenzie 2015; Oosterveer et al. 2014; Tengey 2017; Amankwah-Amoah, Debrah, and Nuertey 2018; Nyarku and Oduro 2017; Agbele 2011).

For these reasons, a collaborative element may particularly be necessary for Ghanaian SMEs, not simply to afford the usual benefits of collaboration in general (Byrkjeland and Ersdal 2013; Genç 2016) but also to afford a navigational functionality able to negotiate interactions between regulatory/certification institutions and requirements and emergent SMEs (Battilana and Dorado 2010). In Ghana (as also elsewhere), this interfacing capacity, in particular, can bridge across ubiquitous shortfalls of print, informational, and/or technological literacy among SME stakeholders – particularly women, who can make up a significant or a majority percentage of agricultural workers (Abor and Biekpe 2006) – and thus increase SME access to markets and the possibility of operational success. Moreover, as we observed in this study, a shortfall (or simply a lack) of formal documentation among SME stakeholders typically required by agencies (including documentation required by financing institutions to approve loans) can impact access as well. As such, while a collaborative SME partner can navigate access to regulatory or certificating regimes on behalf of the SME, it can also convey requirements from those regimes back to the SME.

Such SME-NGO collaborations, however, would also come with risks. For instance, when the negotiating partner serves only as an agent or consultant, they do not necessarily have an immediate stake in the long-term success of the SME itself; they can perform their intermediary service, collect their fee, and move on, whatever the outcome of those negotiations. Inasmuch as such consultancy involves a financial burden and risk for the SME, its cost may be prohibitive and again thereby preclude otherwise qualified or potentially contributory actors from market access. A negotiating function that has a longer-term stake in the SME, and that is built more collaboratively into the SME itself, may therefore be better suited for negotiating regulatory regimes and enabling access for a broader base of SMEs. A hybrid SME-NGO social enterprise would represent one such form of collaborative organization (Lyon and Al Faruq 2018).

Such a collaborative organization can still portend challenges. For instance, while trust is a key value in collaborations, and can mean simply a belief in the probability that a partner will act in non-detrimental way for the partnership (Gambetta 1988, 217), in the wrong circumstances, trust can encourage 'unproductive forms of entrepreneurship' (Höhmann and Welter 2005, 2). Specifically, where *institutional* trust structures only tenuously or do not exist, then *personal* trust between actors can come stand in for those institutional structures, but not always in ways that adequately secure mutual benefit (Höhmann and Welter 2005; Welter and Smallbone 2006). Roberts, Otieno, and Rose (2017), for instance, emphasized how a lack of institutional trust structures (i.e., bank accounts) between entrepreneurs and lending institutions led banks to decline financing and entrepreneurs to seek more onerous or riskier financing from community resources, family members, and loan sharks. This less-than-optimal pattern not only emphasizes a need for alternative financing (such as microfinancing) but also that any such alternatives must be well-suited culturally to local business practice norms (Htun, Myint, and San 2017). Here again, a hybrid SME-NGO social enterprise can be well-positioned not only to negotiate, engineer, and secure such culturally well-suited financing but also to advocate for, or at least present to financial and/or regulatory actors, any indigenous or local practices not known or recognized by those entities that nonetheless support best-practice and positive business outcomes.

Constraints

Although NGOs can contribute to the socioeconomic development of local communities, several factors beyond the bureaucratic challenges above can further constrain such efforts. A lack of infrastructures – for example, often poor or no roads, no reliable or unreliable energy, various transportation issues (especially for the preservation of postharvest materials), and information and communication technology challenges, although these are daily lessening in Africa (Aker and Mbiti 2010) – can perennially complicate efforts, as do changing climate conditions, ecological and agricultural degradation (especially of soil phosphorous), the at-times tenuousness of political stability, and tensions between indigenous rights of use to local resources versus worldwide conservation efforts (Müller et al. 2014; Nziguheba et al. 2016; Fjelde 2015; Reid et al. 2016; Mapfumo, Mtambanengwe, and Chikowo 2016; Codjoe, Owusu, and Burkett 2014).

In general, in fact, it becomes increasingly difficult for the ideology of developmental entrepreneurship to justify itself locally in light of the world-effects of resource extraction, pollution, deforestation, and the like, and yet the prevalence of rural poverty is itself already one of the most seriously exacerbating factors of the world-scene (Sunderlin et al. 2005). As such, if differences in the premises and practices developmental entrepreneurship and sustainability have historically been more in conflict than accord (DiVito and Bohnsack 2017), then the current state of the world now more requires models and practices based on entrepreneurial sustainability itself (Gopinath and Mitra 2017).

A second major constraint in Ghana involves land ownership and security of tenure. Of the nearly 23 million people living in Ghana (CIA 2018), approximately 800,000 households cultivate cocoa in small plots of land (Ghana Statistical Service 2017) , with 80% of farmers owning the land and the remainder as sharecroppers managing the fields or sharing land to cultivate cocoa (World Bank 2013). Two sharecropping systems are recognized in Ghana: *abunu*, where sharecroppers establish cocoa farms and are responsible for the main activities on them (Laven 2010), and *abusa,* where owners provide the inputs and hire caretakers to manage farms for one-third of the crop (ADBG 2011).

The labor intensiveness of cocoa farming prompts Ghanaian farmers at times to organize into informal temporary groups, known as *nnoboa*, to help each other with the harvest and postharvest activities (Laven 2010). However, if all employees must be certified for work, this shifting labor pool becomes a problem unless everyone is locally certified, which is often not financially feasible. In the longer term, it would be encouraging to see these sorts of culturally local structures and associations like nnoboa drawn upon or adapted as assets for cocoa processing rather than being seen as irrelevant or a liability.

A third major constraint involves obtaining sufficient agro-inputs. Stakeholders reported shortages of seedlings, fertilizers, and pesticides needed for producing cocoa beans. Hainmueller, Hiscox, and Tampe (2011), researching the use of agro-inputs by cocoa farmers in Ghana, found that only 21% applied fertilizers and only 37% used insecticides at least once within a year. Aneani et al. (2012) found an even lower use of insecticides, 10.3%, but higher use of fertilizers, 33%. It remains unclear to what extent this shortfall of use is due to costs only, but a general inaccessibility to credit and insurance certainly creates an enormous challenge for farmers who have to rely on their own crops to pay off debts.

Despite the acknowledged importance of financial inputs for achieving both agricultural sustainability as well as technological innovation uptake, access to resources, and poverty reduction (Roberts, Otieno, and Rose 2017, Auma and Mensah 2014; Mishra, Sam, and Mario 2017), Roberts, Otieno, and Rose (2017) found that only 39% of farmers used credit. Of those extended credit, 57% had a bank account, while only 2% of those with bank accounts were denied credit; ‘those who had bank accounts were more likely to access credit because having a bank account serves as guarantee to lenders’ (Roberts, Otieno, and Rose 2017, 2097). Given the low access to credit and that 98% of those denied credit did not have bank accounts, this points to a critical need for sources of financing alternative to banks; all the more so, given that 50% of the loans to farmers in Roberts, Otieno, and Rose (2017) came from farmer societies, friends and relatives, and moneylenders. As such, microfinance has a threefold importance: they (1) make financial inputs available that are crucial for agricultural sustainability and success, both for farmers and processors, (2) alleviate financial burdens placed on other community resources (farmer societies, friends, and relatives), and (3) avoid disadvantageous interest rates from borrowing from moneylenders.

A fourth major constraint involves barriers raised by regulatory or certificatory regimes. Whether by accident or by design, licensure can have problematic consequences (Taylor 1978; Arthur 2014), particularly when certifications necessary for specified kinds of work are disparately denied to some people on the basis of employment authorization status, felony or misdemeanor conviction histories, immigration status, and/or race (Pritchy Smith 1994; Danquah-Brobby 2016; Oberman and Johnson 2015; Ogilvie et al. 2007; Kuczewski, Lantos, and Patel 2018). Inasmuch as these various affected populations tend to intersect around poverty (Currie 2018), this means that licensure (not only in the United States) can serve a gatekeeping function that excludes otherwise qualified poorer people from economic participation (Onwuegbuchulam 2018; Biyase and Zwane 2018).

However, in addition to the bureaucratic and financial aspects of this gatekeeping, in rural African settings, issues of language and literacy can often play an additional role. For instance, differences between national (administrative) dialects and local ones can serve to reproduce and gatekeep the urban/rural divide in general (Bunyi 2008; Kiramba 2017b). Similarly, reduced resources for education in rural settings, along with reduced access to those limited educational resources for girls (Doss 1999), further affects a general print-illiteracy and other educational shortfalls in the dialects needed to navigate the requirements of regulatory or certificatory regimes (Gallardo et al. 2005; Tsikata 2009). This prioritization of nonlocal dialects also fails to take account of, or see as an asset, the literacies and knowledge-frameworks present in local dialects (Kiramba 2017a), thereby failing to take advantage of this valuable local resource.

Alternatives

Microfinancing, as a developmental tool more than simply a banking transaction per se (Ledgerwood 1998), not only reduces poverty in communities, beyond any short-term income or income redistribution effects (Khandker 2005), but also enables what Battilana and Dorado (2010) identify as sustainable hybrid organizations: 'organizations that combine institutional logics in unprecedented ways' (1419). Success for such sustainable hybrid organizations involves creating 'a common organizational identity that strikes a balance between the logics they combine' (1419), i.e. the traditional, local, or indigenous cultures of business practice when and where they interface with the cultures of modernized or technocratic forms of business logistics.

Research suggests that microfinance can, in fact, achieve success in these cross-cultural scenarios (Htun, Myint, and San 2017; Bashir, Bajwa, and Mamoon 2017; Dhar 2017). Considered only locally, the ability of NGOs to advocate on behalf of, or even to provide (as in the present case), microfinancing also points to how to realize this cross-cultural success. While we acknowledge, and to some extent echo, those criticisms of microfinancing that cite problems of funds being diverted by borrowers and/or that raise alarms around how microfinancing can enable all of the worst economic trends of neoliberal globalization, such as greater poverty, wealth inequality, increasing gender gaps, and the like (Jose and Chacko 2017; Bateman, Maclean, and James 2017), we see the source of those problems in specifically nonsustainable entrepreneurial practices. That is, one can hardly expect different (long-term) impacts socially when entrepreneurship (as the object of such microfinancing) is given a neoliberal (economically short-term) orientation and premise, as we discuss more in the following.

This opens still broader questions around sustainable development in general. While the notion of 'sustainable development' begins from an acknowledgment that classical economic developmentalism is largely no longer feasible (Smit et al. 2003; Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien 2005), changes to the entrepreneurial self-identity of any person driving such activity has been slower to change, if at all (Desai 2017). Moreover, both conceptually (Redclift 2005) and at the level of identity and practice (Varadarajan 2004), entrepreneurship under a notion of sustainable development may be little more than a greenwashing (Bakker 2010; Munshi and Kurian 2005) that fails to ameliorate the original problem: development itself. The call by Battilana and Dorado (2010) for sustainable hybrid organizations, then, may in fact point to a need for developmental sustainability rather than sustainable development.

This is not mere semantics (as if semantics were ever *mere*). If Redclift (2005) can refer to the oxymoron of the phrase *sustainable development*, this is because such an idealization strives to make an otherwise acknowledgedly infeasible premise (development) feasible by moderating its activity to be sustainable – rather like arguing for sustainable addiction. And while progress may have been made under the banner of sustainable development – depending on how one attempts to weigh up the evidence for ecologically responsible corporate activity (Ramus and Montiel 2005; Parguel, Benoît-Moreau, and Larceneux 2011; Berrone, Fosfuri, and Gelabert 2017; Alons 2017; Jenkins 2004) – the notion itself still rests fundamentally on an ideological foundation of western rugged individualism that is poorly suited to the needs of a communal, pluralistic, and actually sustainable world-society (Hogue 2017). As such, so long as the sense of the word *entrepreneur* itself aligns with, and participates in, this sense of identity as rugged individualism, then it not only rests on an unsustainable premise but also remains arguably alien to non-Western milieus in the first place, as the destructiveness of the history of colonialism indicates (Subreenduth and Rhee 2010; Mohanty 2003; Harrison 2009). More tragically, such an ideological entrenchment misses one of the most promising aspects of postcolonial history and studies: a demonstrated viability and greater sustainability of an identity – including an entrepreneurial identity – alternative to destructive, rugged individualism (Radhakrishnan 2000).

At its most modest, such a proposed alternative of entrepreneurial identity demands nothing more than recognizing, and taking into account, the validity of local, traditional, or indigenous worldviews when working collaboratively with people toward mutually beneficial socioeconomic gain – something so obvious, it seems gratuitous to mention; nonetheless, this remains a perennially overlooked or downplayed aspect of western (sustainable) developmental activity (Radhakrishnan 2000). The kind of sustainable hybrid organizations proposed by Battilana and Dorado (2010), however, easily integrate this proposal for mutual recognition, as also would drawing or building upon indigenous agricultural organizational practices, like *nnoboa* in this study's case. Such integration could serve to meet (even if it still does not conform to) those bureaucratic forms of certification, accreditation, and qualification demanded by formal business structures.

Until such an organizational transformation can be put into practice, however, NGO activity such as that by the Centre for Learning and Community Development (CLCD) bridges the gap between cocoa processors and wider markets in developmentally sustainable ways due to the community emphasis that the hybrid SME-NGO social enterprise reflects. That is, when socioeconomically 'getting ahead' means leaving others behind, then this locks entrepreneurial activity into socially problematic forms that not only reproduce the very problem that its best aspects would potentially erase but also results in economically and socially unsustainable forms of commercial practice that benefit only small group of individuals at the expense of the community. The community emphasis of hybrid SME-NGO social enterprises potentially avoids this trap.

As such, this emphasis on sustainability as nondisruptive also informs the wider theoretical framing of this paper. In particular, Jenkins (2004) highlights a need to think through what corporate social responsibility looks like in a world where 90% of the businesses are SMEs – and where, we would add, non-sustainable practices also tend to have more disparate impacts on the world's poor than where the 10% of non-SME businesses are more abundant. Our emphasis on nondisruptive socioeconomic behavior therefore links up not only with Jenkins' call for responsibility in business practices generally but also with the wider world of HRD theory as well (Nolan and Garavan 2016).

Methodology

For this research, we used case study as a qualitative approach for investigating the central phenomenon of barriers or constraints to SME entrepreneurship at a cocoa processing facility in rural Ghana. Case study is an appropriate qualitative approach for this work in that it affords an in-depth analysis of a model and/or unique phenomena (Stake 1995). This case is unique, not only for the specifics of the challenging context of Ghanaian SME agricultural entrepreneurship in a market-controlled environment but also in the fact that our case had a "head start" due to owning cocoa processing equipment leftover from a previous NGO's efforts in the area. While the case risks limitations due to a nongeneralizability of its findings, we selected it not only as facing the typical challenges of SMEs in Ghana but also as having some atypical advantages. The uniqueness of this case helps to shed some light on SME cases in general (Stake 1995; Boddy 2016).

Moreover, the quantitative economic research to date around SMEs in Ghana does not as yet tell the day-to-day story on the ground for SME start-up and expansion in Ghana. Qualitative interview data, in particular, helps to get at this kind of material (Jacob and Furgerson 2012). The research questions guiding this work were 'What are the constraints facing SME entrepreneurship for Ghanaian cocoa processors' and 'What impacts from these constraints can be ameliorated or eliminated by partnering with an NGO – framed as a hybrid SME-NGO social enterprise?'

Qualitative data collection consisted of site observations by the researcher as well as in-depth open-ended interviews ($n = 6$) with stakeholders involved in the SME's cocoa processing efforts. These included: the project owner (the local chief), the director of the NGO consulted to negotiate the certification processes for operations approval (two interviews), two cocoa producing farmers who also participate in processing the cocoa into cocoa butter and/or chocolate, and a representative of the local government, who supports the empowerment of local communities and farmers through SME ventures.

Interviews began with, 'Please speak to what you see as the challenges facing the cocoa processing in your country' as a prompt to further questions based on the initial answers. The interviews explored the stakeholders' definitions and understandings of the partnership's activities, including (1) any progress to date, (2) the decision-making processes overall, and (3) any measures of success with respect to accomplishing the wider commercial goals of the collaboration. Interviews were conducted in English when possible, or through a translator, recorded and transcribed verbatim, and then coded and thematically analyzed. We enhanced the validity of the data by member-checking the transcriptions with participants (Creswell 2014; Lincoln and Guba 1985) and triangulating data (Olsen 2004) not only across the interviews but also by comparison with the researchers' site observations.

Moreover, Boddy (2016) recently demonstrated that qualitative research study sizes of as small as one 'can be highly informative and meaningful' (p. 426), and that 'Unique examples of research using a single sample or case but involving new areas or findings that are potentially highly relevant, can be worthy of publication' (426). In the current case, we conducted in-depth interviews with all (100%) of the existing principals in this hybrid social NGO/SME organization (the chief of the village, and the director of the NGO). However, we also sought to further augment and triangulate this data for validity (Jick 1983; Olsen 2004) with in-depth interviews with cocoa processors as well. However, we quickly reached data saturation on the central phenomenon under study (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006; Bowen 2008) such that further interviews would have been gratuitous. Similarly, our interview with a local supportive but constrained government official provided little that contradicted the case study principals' observations around constraints and much that supported them.

The adequacy of this interview sample size ($n = 6$) notwithstanding, limitations to our approach include a risk of nongeneralizability, as well as possible effects from a relatively small interview sample . Nonetheless, the case not only affords an in-depth view of a phenomenon disclosing factors or influences not otherwise accessible to other (quantitative or qualitative) research approaches (Yin 2017) but also exposes unique factors (Boddy 2016).

Case study and discussion: cocoa production and the Center for Learning and Community Development (CLCD) in Ghana

In this case study, we explored one Ghanaian cocoa-processing SME's consultation with an NGO as a means for diversifying and widening the scale and market of its local cocoa processing. The NGO – the CLCD – is local to Cape

Coast (Ghana) and has a mission of empowering local communities and farmers through agri-business training. After transcribing, member-checking, and coding collected data from interviews, major themes that emerged around progress forward for this hybrid SME-NGO social enterprise included: (1) empowering a representative of the NGO to work directly with the processing facility's representative (the village chief) in order to work toward meeting the administrative, regulatory, and certificatory requirements needed for increasing the processing facility's cocoa market, (2) having clear and regular lines of communication between the NGO and processing facility, and (3) the building of trust, in Gambetta's (1988) sense cited above, around mutual commitment, accountability, and transparency. That the production side of the partnership originates from a community-wide vision on the part of the village chief also uniquely makes community a key factor of the successes to date. The challenges, as themes, can be grouped into two major domains: (1) establishing the business and (2) licensing production.

Background

The opportunity for this partnership originated out of a previous (unrelated) NGO providing noncommercial cocoa processing equipment to the village for making chocolate; 'noncommercial' in this case refers to the scale, not the quality, of chocolate making. Because the majority of cocoa production in Ghana involves only growing the beans, and not any postharvest processing of those beans into cocoa products for final sale (chocolate) or further commercial use (cocoa butter), the machinery provided by the previous NGO afforded an increased scope of local cocoa processing and thus a new entrepreneurial opportunity for the village.

When funding for the earlier NGO ran out, the processing machinery was left behind in the village, and the village chief, in collaboration with local farmers, decided to continue making chocolate for sale locally. To support this venture, CLCD extended a microfinancing loan of $1500 to the processing facility (Interview, NGO representative, 2017). To date, $300 of that initial loan has been repaid (Interviews, NGO representative; village chief 2017), and the facility's processed cocoa (as chocolate) is sold only locally, mostly to schools and tourists (Interviews, village chief; local processor #1, 2017). Long-term plans aspire to extend the reach of the processing facility beyond its local markets, and this is where CLCD has become essential for working to acquire the formal documentation, licensure, certification, and other regulatory approvals required for large-scale marketing of the village's chocolate and cocoa butter.

Initially, CLCD offered managerial and operational training only to the processing facility workers. While some of the local people who had operated the processing machinery previously could still do so, CLCD also facilitated the training of newer workers. Knowledge sharing, however, was sometimes reciprocal; 'Those of us who had helped process cocoa before were asked to help with newcomers' (Interview, local processor #2, 2017). At this early stage, CLCD's microfinancing loan particularly helped to demonstrate goodwill and build trust for the overall partnership; 'We could not have been so ambitious without their [CLCD's] help' (Interview, village chief, 2017). Reciprocally, that processing facility actors not only attended training sessions, but also made their own decisions about production after consulting with CLCD for various strategies around processing, packing, selling, and marketing their product, similarly helped to build the NGO's trust that their partner was committed to working toward success as well; 'We [CLCD] saw a very good faith from the cocoa processors, very good faith, and working very hard' (Interview, NGO representative, 2017). While future work by CLCD may also include direct work with farmers to optimize raw material inputs, for the foreseeable future, the main activity for CLCD will be navigating the administrative, certificatory, and regulatory bureaucracies in Ghana (and more widely, as needed) in order to secure a formal enterprise identity for the facility. In this way, the NGO has moved from an original 'consultant only' type of role toward one more invested in the long-term success of the SME itself, consistent with the kind of collaboration possible for hybrid SME-NGO social enterprises (Lyon and Al Faruq 2018).

Establishing a business

While the Ghanaian government, like elsewhere, generally requires formal registration as part of doing business, informal business can be (or simply is) conducted without such registration. At the study site, while the stakeholders have been able to operate informally without a registration, CLCD has already proactively moved toward formalizing the partnership's business structure, partly to enable its wider-scale market aspirations but also in response to the partnership's increasing local visibility; 'We [the SME-NGO collaboration] cannot expand operations much more. We are already visible to local officials' (Interview, NGO representative, 2017). This visibility links as well to the command regime of COCOBOD as a major constraint and actor in the Ghanaian cocoa market. That is, the actual and concrete regulatory regime in Ghana is complicated by an intermingling of COCOBOD's monopoly and the otherwise typical challenges faced by entrepreneurship. Separating these two factors explicitly in Ghana is impracticable; that is, it is not feasible to distinguish the illegality of not entrepreneurially conforming to regulatory regimes from the illegality of certain non-conforming types of entrepreneurship in general. Moreover, if COCOBOD imposes constraints, it also creates opportunities and a degree of market stability, all of which (good and bad) would be annulled by abolishing it. This situation, in fact, points up the need for expressly culture-specific approaches and solutions, since the rules of entrepreneurial engagement under COCOBOD – or, more properly speaking, across the whole landscape of Ghanaian entrepreneurship and SME activity – will differ in their specifics from similar wide-scale market constraints elsewhere.

The study area is situated along a high-traffic tourist route. Through word-of-mouth, tourists are now aware that local chocolates are available (Interview, village chief, 2017), but 'They sometimes ask questions. Whether the business is legitimate. And whether the chocolate is safe to eat' (Interview, NGO representative, 2017). The further that word gets 'out' about the chocolate, the more it catches the attention of various bureaucracies and requires a transition from informal to a more formal structure of business operations; 'We are fortunate that [one local official, cited below] supports our village and what we are doing' (Interview, village chief, 2017).

This process of formalization involves four major levels: (1) formalities that enable the longest-term goals of making the SME-NGO partnership a player in the wider national, regionally international (Western African), and even international markets, (2) business requirements for more modestly accessing at least regionally nearby markets, (3) contractual and logistic interfaces between the local cocoa growers and the processing facility itself, and (4) relationships and logistics amongst the cocoa growers for delivering raw inputs to the processing center. While item (1) remains a future aspiration, to date, items (3) and (4) have been handled exclusively by the processing facility's representative and owner, the village chief, whose land in three villages provides all of the agro-inputs for the venture and coordinates the farmer labor and delivery of cocoa beans to the production area. CLCD's major activity of late has been around item (2).

In general, processing facility stakeholders reported having little to nothing of the kind of documentation accepted for formal business registration (deeds of ownership, etc.); sharecroppers would often have even less formal documentation (for example, signed contracts, formal work arrangements); 'When [the NGO representative] first asked if I had any papers for work, I laughed' (Interview, local processor #2, 2017). 'I knew that the answer was *no* – we do things by one's word here – but I had to ask because the agencies ask' (Interview, NGO representative, 2017). CLCD's representative added, however, that if the NGO were somehow to be responsible for collecting and preparing (if not sometimes somehow creating) all such documentation, along with covering fees and providing transportation to administrative centers – and even translation services in some cases – then not only the number of clients but also the annually recurring character of these activities and expenses would quickly overrun its capacity (Interview, NGO representative, 2017).

According to the village chief, the most immediate concerns for the partnership involve increased raw material access and securing more machinery for wider-scale production, including machines to de-husk and grind beans (Interview, village chief, 2017). Specifically, many of the local roads to outlying areas of cocoa bean fields often do not permit travel by car or truck, while travel there by motorbike affords an only limited amount of transport capacity. As such, a 'tricycle,' or motorbike-and-trailer or sidecar, able to traverse the roads but with more capacity to transport raw cocoa beans would be a major asset for the processing facility (Interview, village chief, 2017). Additionally, while the facility currently has a refrigerator for storing chocolate, it is already at capacity; a second, or larger, one is needed.

These infrastructural difficulties notwithstanding, with expanded production capacity the village chief foresees not only meeting the facility's greater revenue flow goals but also a realization of his hope to provide local youths with opportunities for employment as well. Such expanded production will also ultimately require advertisement, a warehouse, and an official production office, as well as further consultancy with CLCD to provide managerial and logistical expertise to facilitate that expansion.

In terms of establishing a business at the level of operations, the decision-making process is simplified immensely by the fact that the organizational structure affords the village chief and NGO's director (as representatives of the SME and NGO, respectively) sole responsibility for determining business directions.

Nonetheless, open lines of communication between themselves and processors have afforded frank and reality-based discussions about difficulties and challenges facing the partnership. On both sides, the representatives have remained open to questioning. Moreover, the village chief can call upon the NGO to do additional managerial training (Interview, village chief, 2017), while the NGO representative can ask the chief to change procedures at the processing facility (Interview, NGO representative, 2017). This mutuality has emerged out of a sense of trust, as a credible expectation by the partners for one another that they will consistently act in the interest of the partnership (Gambetta 1988); as the village chief expressed it, '*I* know that *we* must work together' (Interview, village chief, 2017, emphasis in original).

Licensing production

As with the process for registering a business in Ghana, the food safety bureaucracy for cocoa processors poses a similar set of challenges around documentation, fees, and licensure. For the processing facility itself, these issues remain largely outside the purview of the village chief; that is, responsibility for coordination of these issues has fallen almost entirely on CLCD. For the NGO, decision-making across this domain has been a continual search for ways to mitigate seemingly ever-multiplying costs and regulatory requirements.

Without formal licensure, the processing facility can market its wares at the village level only. However, unlike the relatively simple issue of documentation for registration as a business, licensure and certification of postharvest cocoa products (chocolate and cocoa butter) introduces a number of additional approval processes and details, including (1) health certification by the Environmental Health Inspectorate for any workers at the processing facility, (2) recurring laboratory testing of chocolate, and (3) licensing/certification of the site and machinery currently used for processing. Although familiar and conventional costs of doing business in developed-world contexts, the overhead these costs introduce in lower income, developing-world contexts can become quickly prohibitive.

For instance, while intended to increase the safety of cocoa production and its products, such licensing/certification also serves to create 'an identifiable class of merchants who have a shared sense of economic destinies … [with] associational groupings designed primarily to protect the economic and commercial interests of their members' (Arthur 2014, 46–7); this class consists of those established or newcomer ventures that could meet the criteria and costs of certification. For more socioeconomically disadvantaged would-be entrepreneurs, particularly necessity entrepreneurs, that an entity like CLCD can help to shepherd processors through the bureaucratic maze of approvals, certifications, and accreditations becomes virtually mandatory.

The requirement for laboratory testing of chocolate – which involves multiple fees over time and a wasting of a portion of one's inventory – incurs considerable costs and risks. Testing required the provision of 12 samples of chocolate (Interview, NGO representative, 2017). Because the time required for testing is often slow and eats into any schedule of production, inventory is at greater risk to spoil – or production simply stops, because the refrigerator is full – and the venture becomes at greater risk to miss any local seasonal sales opportunities (or international shipping deadlines when operating at that scale). Testing fees also may be exorbitant or artificially increased, and it may not be clear if the results themselves will be accepted by regulatory bureaucracies domestically or internationally. In this study's case, CLCD was able to identify an at-least-nationally recognized testing facility at a Ghanaian university, albeit one with very high fees (Interview, NGO representative, 2017).

Timing for payment was also an issue; 'I was given a deadline to make payment for testing, which, if I delay and it expires, means I will have to restart the process again because it deals with laboratory booking' (Interview, NGO representative, 2017). Whether a reasonable or unreasonable ordeal that SME processing facilities might encounter, they cannot afford to negotiate these on the fly, much less by trial and error. The assistance of NGO knowledge holders able to keep abreast of any new policy or regulatory changes around these time-sensitive issues can become critical for entrepreneurial success. While CLCD was able to successfully negotiate this possible snag, 'I worry what will happen the next time or with still another issue' (Interview, NGO representative, 2017).

Other licensure requirements, for instance, have proven less tractable. Preliminary site inspections of the processing facility have resulted in a number of mandated renovations, including the addition of rooms for production tools, for workers to change clothes, and for hand-washing and cleaning. The facility's exterior also requires redesign and re-landscaping – all of this at considerable additional cost. During the inspection, the official noted in passing that a fumigation certificate would be needed, although that would be granted by another office entirely. 'All of this was revealed to me after I had already made the initial business registration and signed for the rest of the required activities for that to commence' (Interview, NGO representative, 2017).

In our case study, the NGO representative remarked many times on the several various and exorbitant fees, including the site inspector's recommendation that he hire a professional business consultant for the partnership (Interview, NGO representative, 2017). The NGO representative also reported approaching a regional administrator for government support. While the regional minister stated that he could help to speed up some of the approval processes, he noted that no money from the government would be forthcoming until the venture had already officially established itself as a viable enterprise – in other words, only after it was a success; 'Our ministry stands ready to help, but there are only limited funds and only so many we can help' (Interview, departmental official, 2017).

In our interview with the governmental official, he reiterated this but also stressed his support for the cocoa processing site's economic ambitions and insisted that 'helping our home-gown businesses to thrive takes a holistic approach' (Interview, departmental official, 2017). Asked to elaborate on this further, he noted that Ghanaian farmers have their own way of doing things, 'like everywhere in the world does' (Interview, departmental official, 2017), and that success in the area must necessarily draw on those traditions and ways of doing things, even when trying to change them. He also stressed that there was little he could do at the moment to materially support the cocoa processing plant. 'There is no money' (Interview, departmental official, 2017) was his repeated refrain, and he described organizational snags as originating from higher up in the government.

Constraints

With regard to the specific constraints reported by stakeholders, one of these included shortages of agro-inputs, including seedlings, fertilizers, and pesticides needed for producing cocoa beans, consistent with findings by Hainmueller, Hiscox, and Tampe (2011). In the present case, a crisscrossing hybrid of locally practiced *abusa* (which requires the village chief to provide the majority agro-inputs) and *abunu* (under which farmers largely make their own decisions about planting strategies) attempts to solve the agro-input problem. However, wider problems of infrastructure (poor roads), transportation capacity (inability to get raw cocoa volumes to the processing site), and storage (inadequate refrigeration on site) further complicate the processing value-chain. In fact, the village chief tended to stress these "logistical" issues more frequently than any other point.

As such, a sufficiency of local labor seems less of a problem than production-chain logistics. However, as the NGO director emphasized, the requirement of certification for *any* cocoa processor onsite introduces not only prohibitive costs but further personnel problems. For example, the Ghanaian collective work tradition of *nnoboa* (Laven 2010), which convenes *ad hoc* work groups to support the labor intensiveness of cocoa production, represents a culturally flexible and temporary labor asset in the area that ill fits rigid and permanent labor certification requirements. Although *nnoboa*-like groups might supply an adaptive and flexible backbone of labor at the processing facility, can accommodate frequent shifts of personnel, and in fact may represent the most efficient and adaptive way to accomplish such work, regulatory certification of workers precludes this form of labor, even without regard to its expense.

A conventional address to this problem, as noted previously, includes financial assistance (microfinancing) or going more deeply into debt (Roberts, Otieno, and Rose 2017). In the present case, the village chief provides the main agro-inputs for crop *production* based on long-standing local traditions (*abusa*); this (as well as the abandoned cocoa processing equipment from the previous NGO) provides an uncharacteristic advantage for the cocoa *processing* SME that many small enterprises might not otherwise have. The microfinancing loan from CLCD has partly been used to subsidize these costs but was more intended to defray costs associated obtaining more machinery, increased raw materials transport, and a larger refrigerator to expand processing capacity. As such, the unforeseen or underestimated costs associated with business registration, licensing, certification, and testing, in contrast, have seriously impacted the ability of the SME to move forward *despite* its relative advantages. This demonstrates, consonant with Arthur (2014) cited above, how inhibitory regulatory regimes can be to economic contribution by willing and relatively able parties.

Alternatives

A key contribution of this study is how this hybrid SME-NGO social enterprise in Ghana embodies a specifically *sustainable* organization (Battilana and Dorado 2010). At root, sustainability advocates for the best (short-term) positive outcomes with the least (long-term) negative impacts. This framework of outcomes and impacts may draw inspiration from medical literature, where health practitioners and scientists place great emphasis on reducing harmful (long-term) impacts from any (short-term) procedural outcomes. This emphasis in medicine points to a continual search for, and improvements on, the least disruptive ways to achieve any called for or needed (short-term) outcomes that similarly are optimally non-disruptive over the long-term. This framework for sustainable health practices for patients dovetails perfectly with the notion of sustainable wealth practices for communities, where there could (even should) be a continual search for, and improvements on, the least disruptive ways to achieve any called for or needed (short-term) incomes with the least disruptive impacts over the long-term.

Beyond the strategic benefits of hybrid social enterprises as partnerships within the current economic world order (Lyon and Al Faruq 2018; Battilana and Dorado 2010), here we would emphasize how the hybrid SME-NGO organization of our case moves towards the least (short-term) social disruption in order to also minimize the (long-term) impacts of that disruption. Most importantly, this hybrid social enterprise supports local dialect use organizationally, offloading to the NGO any need to translate (sometimes literally) the goals, intentions, ambitions, desires, and practices of the SME to (external) third-parties otherwise illiterate in those local practices. This applies to day-to-day operations as well, because dialect is always never only communication but also a worldview-informed ethos and practice, even more so in nonprint literate or oral-only settings (Ong 1982). This nondisruptiveness of ethos is akin to the kind of attention to local/cultural specificity highlighted in the successful microfinancing cited previously (e.g., Htun, Myint, and San 2017).

Enhancing, or drawing upon, the local tradition of *nnoboa*-like groups could be one way to affect this culturally local emphasis as well, but this is not to suggest that local practice cannot, or need not, change. It is, rather, simply that any desired behavioral interventions into the local worldview or practices and dialect in Ghana may have better (short-term) outcomes and less disruptive (long-term) impacts when addressed in this culturally competent, locally understood way (Levett-Olson 2010). While the local processors were willing to follow the advice of the village chief's own desire to meet various demands for regulatory changes at the processing site, the mismatch between their past experiences of making safe chocolate and the regulatory regime's imputation that such practices were unsafe made little sense to them, except as a species of institutional graft. Critically, the NGO's representative also attempted to 'translate' the logic of the regulatory requirements to the processors as well, although the results of that effort were inconclusive. This kind of bi-directional interaction nevertheless illustrates one moment where an attempt is being made to minimize a disruption of local practice, whether in the processors' claim that such changes are not necessary in the first place, or in the NGO representative's efforts to find an argument to elicit buy-in for those changes (for instance, by appealing to the workers' sense of work-site safety). Without this bi-directional translating function by the NGO's representative, there would be little to no attempt at all to minimize the long-term effects that would result from (short-term) disruptive interventions into local practices.

Conclusions: recommendations, future research, and limitations

In conclusion, this study explored some of the major factors affecting both the wider reach of smaller scale, SME cocoa processing activity in Ghana as well as ways that a collaborative, hybrid SME-NGO social enterprise organization helped to widen that reach. On multiple fronts, the key role of the NGO, as part of this hybrid social enterprise, was to provide 'translation' services for interfacing both the bureaucracies of the various regulatory regimes charged with product and employee certification, site approval, and business documentation, and the owner and staff of the processing facility itself. This translation was not just linguistic (and communicative) but also cultural (and rooted in practices) as well. Moreover, the NGO's role was not only consultative; that is, its own fate became bound up in the success of the cocoa processing venture in general.

Notwithstanding the perennial difficulties of access for would-be cocoa producers – including access to national literacies, to agro-inputs, credit, and insurance, to changes in bureaucratic protocols and revisions in national cocoa regulations, and to up-to-the-minute information about fluctuations in the national and/or international cocoa markets – the requirements around business registration and licensure serve, whatever the merits of their intended purpose or not, to protect existing interests in various cocoa markets for those already registered and licensed. This situation argues forcefully for an advocatory NGO voice on behalf of those talented and qualified farmers and processors who would enter such markets, even at an only regional national scale. Such advocacy would help to relevel the already unleveled tilt of the playing field and thus afford benefits to local communities by letting these new ventures contribute economically. For many of these ventures, their reach in any case might never expand beyond the local. A hybrid social enterprise of the type described here represents one way to meet this advocatory criterion.

Just as importantly, the case of this hybrid NGO-SME social enterprise underscores its more sustainable characteristics, above all in the way that it can help to resist or reduce long-term social disruptions (impacts) on communities due to any (short-term) economic activity in the present. Building, or drawing on, traditions within local cultures – whether practices for employment like *nnoboa* for processing raw cocoa into cocoa butter and chocolate, or by framing local dialects of practice as assets rather than liabilities – represents a major way to minimize disruptions from outcomes for the sake of long-term sustainability. At the individual level of entrepreneurial actors, this supports the development of an entrepreneurial self-identity that ideally augments, rather than disruptively supplants or replaces, the culturally prior, local sense of cocoa producer and processor self-identity (Desai 2017; Audretsch et al. 2017).

As such, while future research could more closely examine the further role and effects of regulatory/certification regimes on SMEs – whether such regimes are institutionally self-serving or (on balance) in the public's real interests, whether they actually reach and/or enforce the safety benchmarks they aspire to (and why not, if not), or whether (and to what degree) they may actually risk or decrease public safety – additional research could also study other cases of SME-NGO hybrid social enterprises. Such research could identify (1) additional 'translating' capacities by NGOs cross-culturally, especially across international boundaries, (2) changes of practice on-the-ground at SMEs that would inform the literature on policy change motivation and buy-in, and (3) any broader benchmarks or measures of community 'health' signaled by sustainable (less disruptive) practices of change. Also, we agree with Ede (2018) who proposed that studies around SME perceptions of obstacles might benefit from thinking about SMEs not only in terms of numerical size but also in more qualitative (or more precisely quantitative) terms. That is, the perceived size of an obstacle itself can shift according to the SMEs situation, regardless of the SNE's numerical size. Although our case had an initial advantage of equipment and access to labor, the stringency and expense of the regulatory regime (not including its corruption) imposed a burden that heavily challenged its prospects for success. Future research, in fact, may disclose hybrid social enterprises as the most effective, or perhaps the only, type of SME organization able to (legally) overcome these pressures.

While promising, the results of this study are also limited by the caution to be exercised about the generalizability of its findings. For instance, that some of the machinery and storage equipment for processing cocoa at the facility of our case was previously supplied by an earlier NGO represents an advantage of capital not characteristic of all SME start-ups. Similarly, as a tacit possession of a chief in charge of three villages and with access to labor – some of whom were previously trained in cocoa processing – this also speaks to a 'head start' and advantage at our case. Further research to more exactly characterize the role of this kind of relative advantage for starting the SME, as well as the way it informs the distinction between opportunity or necessity entrepreneurs in general, remains to be done. Similarly, while our case is typical for an agricultural SME in a country where a large agricultural board controls the market, the specific factors and influences at play from Ghana's COCOBOD may not be present in settings (1) without these boards or (2) where the historical and ongoing determinants of such boards exert different socioeconomic pressures and effects.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on Contributors

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